From: Chris
To: McGovern, Marc
Subject: Re: Have you changed your position?
Date: Friday, April 20, 2018 12:48:41 AM

Dear Marc,

Thanks for your prompt response. I really appreciate it, especially since I know you have a lot on your plate.

I understand your position about not wanting the proposal to come up unless it is going to pass, and I think that a resolution asking for a report back on companies and countries that we have relationships with is an excellent idea in itself. I urge you to go forward with it. I do want to point out however that you are, in a sense, bowing to pressure when you give in to the pretty specious argument that BDS is unfair because it "singles Israel out" when there are other countries guilty of human rights violations (perhaps even our own?). When North Carolina passed "the bathroom bill" a number of cities and organizations decided to boycott that state. They didn't do it under the general rubric of boycotting any state where civil rights are violated. They *specifically targeted* North Carolina because they knew doing so would make a difference on that issue, in that place, at that time. And it did. I could use a million other examples (including the sanctions against South Africa).

The people at MAHP were, I believe, very appreciative of your willingness to be helpful and give advice. Yes, they do have their own agenda, which is to put pressure on Israel to end the occupation of the West Bank and the horrendous seige of Gaza. They are not attempting to right all the wrongs in the world- although I believe that most, if not all, of them also feel strongly about combatting racism, supporting immigrants and refugees, reforming the legal justice system, and other social justice and human rights issues which happen to overlap in significant ways with the conflict in Israel/Palestine. BDS and MAHP believe the way to put pressure on Israel is to call Israel out, directly and specifically, for their violations of international law and human rights. If you believe that down the road HP might end up on a list of corporations Cambridge would prefer not to do business with that would not be a bad outcome; but I believe that, given the suffering in Gaza and the West Bank and the rapid expansion of the settlements it is important to take action **now** and the the most powerful way to do that is to lend our support to, and thus strengthen, the larger movement that is BDS.

As for your worry about being "guilty by association with a movement that has *made and taken many controversial statements and positions*," I am, first of all, curious as to what statements and positions you are referring to. Some people object the the part of BDS that calls for boycotting academic institutions. BDS has

many good answers for that since it is often misunderstood; but even if I were not persuaded by those answers I would still support the larger movement. "Divide and conquer" is a large part of Israeli strategy and I will not be a victim of it, Mainly, however, I would argue that, whatever controversial *statements or positions* BDS may have make or taken, being guilty by assocation with them is in no way the same as the guilt we should feel by refusing to stand up agains the *actions* of Israel, such as imprisoning the people of Gaza inside a ten year long blockade and repeatedly and brutally bombing them, destroying their infrastructure and economy, while at the same time relentlessly appropriating land and water from the people in the west bank, severely restricting their movement, and arresting, detaining and torturing their citizens- including children - while turning a blind eye to all forms of harassment by settlers, etc. etc. etc - all with the support and endorsement of the US government.

I am a person who tries to see the good in all people and understand things from all angles, and I do not demonize the people of Israel, (some of whom, by the way, are the most persuasive of all critics of their government). I also don't demonize the supporters of Israel in this country. Some of them are coming from a place (a good place) of loyalty and attachment to their family and their Jewish culture. Most of the Jewish people I know, however, especially the ones I would label "good progressives," are *strongly* opposed to the policies of this regime and to Zionism in general, coming from a similar place of loyalty to the traditions and values they learned from their families. The major difference between these two groups is that the former tend to be seriously uninformed or misinformed about what is happening in the West Bank and Gaza as well and the history that led up to it. To the extent they do know about the situation today, they don't like it but are still fearful that any criticism of Israel will encourage anti-Semitism.

I do hope you go forward with the idea to do a study of countries and companies with whom Cambridge does business, though I expect there would be a strong fight to keep Israel off that list. And I would not assume that your advice has not been appreciated, if not always followed, especially since it is my understanding that there is a possibility the proposal will not be brought forward this Monday.

Warmly as always,

Chris

On Thu, Apr 19, 2018 at 10:29 PM, McGovern, Marc <mmcGovern@cambridgema.gov> wrote:

> Hey Chris,

I hope Italy was nice. Still trying to get there.

First on the phone poll. I did not receive it. I hear it was pretty offensive. I received a call from Robert Tristan from the ADL today. I asked him if they were behind the call. He said "no". I would like to find out who is behind it but I'm not sure if we can.

Second, my position has changed somewhat. I don't disagree with anything that you have told me about the horrifying issues in Israel. I am also not bowing to pressure (I think you know that I don't bow easily, remember the innovation agenda?) I have, however, received a lot of emails and calls from Cambridge residents (many whom I know and respect) who feel strongly that aligning with the BDS movement is wrong. Many are people who I would call "good progressives" like yourself and others. My biggest issue is that this is not just a local issue. The more I looked into the BDS movement, there are things I like and things I really don't. I'm not sure that I want Cambridge being looped in with this larger movement. The question I asked myself (and a few others) was: "If Cambridge buys HP products, and HP sells technology to Israel, and Israel uses that technology at border crossing thus making Cambridge guilty by association of human rights violations, then if we support local residents, who are part of MA Against HP and MA Against HP is under the umbrella of the BDS movement, then aren't we also guilty by association of a movement that has made and taken many controversial statements and positions?"

I would also say that for some of you, you have been at this issue for decades. I haven't. It's complicated. I don't feel that I have it all sorted out yet to put myself and the city into the middle of an international firestorm.

Also there are not 5 votes for this. Do I want to divide the community, and it would, for something that is not going to pass?

We had a rather tense meeting the other day. I was brutally honest. I said that I could see a way to get five votes to pass something more general. Something that asked for a report back on the companies and countries that we have political and financial relationships with that are considered human rights violators, and then for us to have a discussion about whether or not we want to continue with those relationships. We would have to not make this about HP and Israel specifically. The MA Against HP folks have no interest in that. There are a lot of things I don't know but I know Cambridge politics, and I think I could get something like that passed. It wouldn't be as glamorous and headline grabbing, but in the end may result in our pulling out of HP along with other relationships. For example, I have been asked to file a policy order recommitting Cambridge to remaining a sister city with Yerevan in Armenia. The Yerevan government has recently taken control of the media, have had illegal elections and are persecuting LGBT members of their society. I have refused to file that order until we better understand what is happening there. This issue goes beyond

HP and Israel. I am willing to have that larger conversation, but William and others, despite saying this is about the larger issue of human rights, have no interest in going that route because they have their own agenda (and I don't blame them for that. Of course they want this to be about HP, that is their issue. I would want the same thing). The problem is, there is no Councillor, maybe with the exception of Carlone, who wants to vote for this, but there are councillors who want a broader conversation.

I would also say that at one of the meetings (I can't remember if you were there), I asked William to not put a date out to the public until we had votes lined up. He did it anyway. It caused a shit show. I have been working with MAHP, trying to help put this issue into a better political position and they don't seem interested in my advice. Now they have backed everyone into a corner. I think this needs to sit for a while and we need to think about another way to approach the issue. I would be happy to do that but I feel that MAHP has their own agenda and really doesn't want my help in figuring out how to reach their goal, even if it's a more round about way.

So, I guess that's it. I am not bailing on this whole issue, nor am I bowing to right wing pressure. As I said, many of the Cambridge folks who emailed me are not right wing zealots. As far as the folks from outside Cambridge who have been more harsh, I just delete those. So lets see what develops but at this point this is DOA and we need to figure out another strategy, but I don't really think they want my help unless I just agree with them 100%.

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From: Chris <chritopheranne@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 19, 2018 7:34:35 PM
To: McGovern, Marc
Subject: Have you changed your position?

Dear Mark,

I just got back from a brief "vacation" and learned that you have apparently changed course on your support of the HP boycott.

Is this true? If so I am wondering what your reasons are and hoping you can take a minute to give me at least the short version. If someone has managed persuaded you that it is wrong to oppose Israel's current regime's policies of oppression and suppression I would truly be curious to know what they said. If someone has tried to intimidate you I would like to know their tactics.

I know you have a lot on your plate right now and I am sure there has been a lot of push back on this issue. Undoubtedly you have been getting letters or calls opposing this. You might be interested to know about one of the tactics being used to encourage those letters. This is a quote from an email I got today from a friend:

I just received a call to take a survey about Cambridge that was a series of questions designed to demonize our efforts with city council. I couldn't get much info from the very sweet african american woman conducting it who could only say the company's name was Mass Survey.
the questions included, did I know that bds was an attempt to destroy Israel led by a terrorist organization named Hamas, etc.

She was wondering if others had gotten such a call and if anyone knew what we could do about it.

Mark, this is not a time to bow to pressure from the ADL and the JCRC. Israel's behavior in the last week - using snipers to kill many and injure thousands of demonstrators in Gaza (and even celebrating as they shot them in the back!) - is showing what I would say are the "true colors" of the current Isaeli government which routinely represses and denies the civil and human rights of the people whose land they are occupying. Even the New York Times has spoken out against what is going on there.

I know that supporting this boycott may seem like a risky position to take but I

believe you will be rewarded rather than punished in the end.

I do hope you can take a minute to respond and I will not repeat or quote you if you say you prefer me not to.

With warm best wishes,

Chris